

Fiscal TOPICS

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Judicial Retirement System

The Judicial Retirement System includes Supreme Court Justices, Court of Appeals Judges, District Court Judges, District Associate Judges, Associate Probate Judges, and Associate Juvenile Judges. Magistrates are covered by the Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS).

A judge is eligible to retire at age 65 with a minimum of four years of service, or at age 50 with 20 years of service. All active judges are required to retire at age 72, although a judge may apply for senior judge status. As a senior judge, the individual receives a monthly retirement annuity, along with an annual stipend as set by the General Assembly. A senior judge must work a minimum of 13 weeks a year, but may not practice law. Judges participating in the Senior Judge Program are required to retire at age 78 unless reappointed by the Supreme Court for additional one-year terms up to age 80.

The monthly retirement benefit is based on the average salary for the highest three years of service multiplied by 3.25%, multiplied by the years of service, with the maximum amount not to exceed 65.0% of the current base salary. The normal form of payment is an annuity payable for the life of the judge. Half of the amount is payable to an eligible surviving spouse upon the judge's death, totaling at least the amount of the judge's contributions. A spouse is eligible if married to the judge for at least one year preceding death. A judge can receive a disability retirement for total and permanent disability with a minimum of four years of credited service.

Membership Statistics

The Judicial Retirement System had a total of 404 members as of July 1, 2014, including 204 active members, 128 retirees and beneficiaries, and 61 Senior Judges. The average age of an active member is 57.15, with an average of 11.5 years of service, and an average annual salary of \$139,874. The average retiree annual benefit is \$54,620.

Actuarial Valuation Factors

The current required contribution rate for a judge is 9.35%, and the state's required contribution rate is 30.6% for a total contribution rate of 39.95%, in accordance with Iowa Code section [602.9104](#). As of the June 30, 2014, actuarial valuation of the Judicial Retirement System, the funded ratio is 77.50%, and the unfunded accrued liability is \$41.3 million. The actuarial value of assets is \$142.6 million, and the actuarial accrued liabilities for the system total \$183.9 million.¹

Related Statutes

Iowa Code chapter [602](#)

More Information

Iowa General Assembly: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/>

Judicial Branch: <http://www.iowacourts.gov/>

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¹ Once the Judicial Retirement System reaches fully-funded status, the state's share will be 60.0% of the actuarial contribution rate and the employee's share will be 40.0% of the actuarial contribution rate.